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Reconciling Growth with History: Student Engagement and Research on the Southside of San Antonio

John Donahue

Trinity University, jdonahue@trinity.edu

Christine Drennon

Trinity University, cdrennon@trinity.edu

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Reconciling Growth with History: Student Engagement and Research on the Southside of San Antonio

“They built the tunnel and Olmos Dam to save downtown, that’s good, but we have paid the price.”

- a Southside resident

Christine Drennon, Ph.D. and John M. Donahue, Ph.D.

And the Students of Research Methods: Fieldwork and Geographical Information Systems

**Social Research Training Institute
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
One Trinity Place
Trinity University
San Antonio, Texas 78212**

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Introduction

In September 2004, the *San Antonio Express News* reported that the Southside Independent School District (SISD) was growing faster than any other school district in San Antonio. The opening of a new Toyota manufacturing plant, the possibility of a new Texas A&M University campus, and the difficulties of further development on the north side of the city have culminated in new opportunities for urban growth on the south side of the city. While population growth is anticipated, the school districts there must prepare well in advance for the new students. Who are they? Where do they live? Where do their parents work? How do their families feel about this new growth? The answers to questions such as these will help the school districts prepare for their new responsibilities. These are the questions that two classes at Trinity University set out to answer.

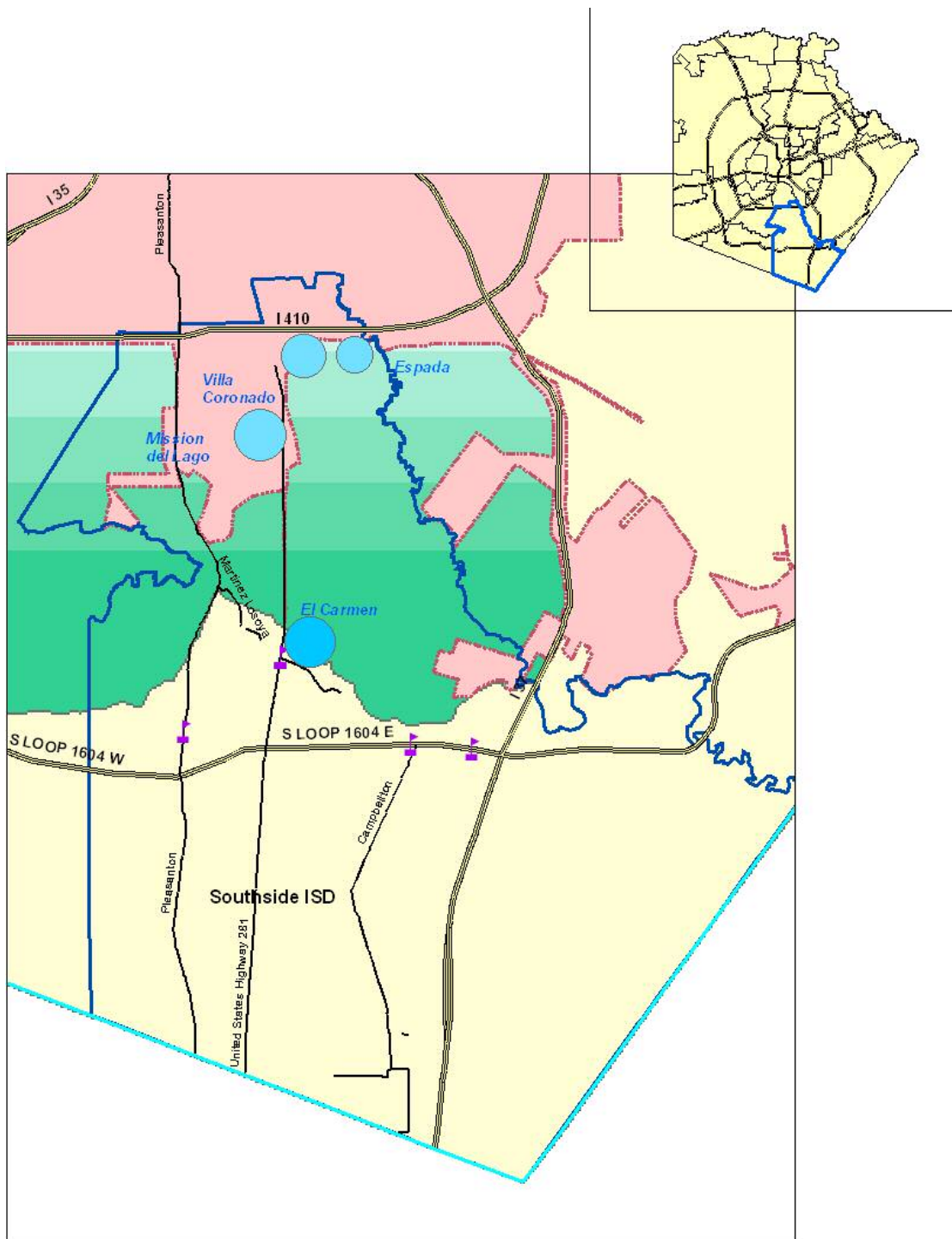
Every spring semester, two classes in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Trinity University come together to apply their different methodologies to one shared project in San Antonio. This year, that project involved a diachronic and synchronic examination of the Southside School District. Two classes – Field Studies in Anthropology and GIS and Urban Studies – conducted this analysis for the residents and administrators of the SISD. The Field Studies class surveyed four different communities in order to understand how individuals felt about the sudden growth of their area. In so doing, students learned interviewing and ethnographic techniques. The Urban Studies and GIS class performed quantitative analyses of the growth patterns of

the area. They mapped where various city services are located and who had access to them. These students learned geographic information systems technology as they conducted this analysis of the school district. The following report documents their findings. It is divided into four parts: part I is an historical overview of the communities living in the Southside school district and a brief history of the district itself, with a demographic analysis of the current population; part II is a contemporary analysis of the communities and of the schools in the SISD. Part III provides an overview of the Services and Social Opportunities available in the area, including basic needs and city services, transportation, community services, library services, health services, crime and emergency services, commercial development, and zoning. Part IV, Current and Future Land Use in the SISD, discusses current land use and introduces the available information for future developments.

I. Overview of the Southside Communities in the Study

The history of the Southside is one of small outlying farming and ranching communities whose geographical and collective center was the local church. Of the four communities that formed the basis of this study, the two oldest, Espada and Thelma-Losoya formed around 18th and 19th century churches, Espada Mission and El Carmen. The other two communities in the study, Villa Coronado and Mission de Lago, are more recent residential areas, reflecting the gradual, southward urban growth of the City of San Antonio. All four communities are now swept up in an explosion of real estate development on the Southside, spurred by the construction of a Toyota Truck Plant, the proposed building of a new

Texas A&M University campus in the area, and conflicts between developers and environmentalists over further building on the north side of the city over the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer. We begin with an overview of each of the communities (map 1).



Map 1. The Southside Independent School District. The four field sites are marked. Part of the district lies in the county and part of the district lies in the City of San Antonio.

PART I. SETTLEMENT OF THE DISTRICT AND CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Espada Mission

The community of Espada is the oldest residential area in the Southside District, dating back to the arrival of the Spanish. The Franciscans founded Mission San Francisco de la Espada in 1731 and the church was completed in 1756. The nearby *acequia* was completed in 1745 to carry water from the Piedras Creek to the fields surrounding the mission. The original inhabitants of the mission were the Spanish and the Native Americans, who did most of the manual labor. Many of the families living around the mission have lived there for generations on the original land grants.

Thelma/Losoya and El Carmen:

After Espada Mission, Thelma Losoya, is the next oldest community on the Southside. In 1834 Dionicio Martinez was granted land near the Medina River by the Mexican government, which in time became the community of Losoya. The town of Thelma was founded in 1904 and is located in the center of the original Martinez land grant. Many people have lived in the area for generations, often since the original settlement of the area. Some of these “old family names” are Martinez, Losoya, Gallardo and Toudouze.

El Carmen Church (Nuestra Señora del Carmen) was established in 1817 and has been the center for the community. This community was especially flourishing in the 1870s and 1880s and the church held a very large amount of land in the area and was referred to as a mission in contemporary writings. Shortly after this period, there was a decline in the church population and there

was no priest actually residing at El Carmen between 1905 and 1956. During this time, several people living around the church realized that the cemetery was falling into disrepair and animals were allowed to graze freely. They founded a society to care for the cemetery in 1927 called, at that time, La Sociedad Cementerio del Carmen. The society later changed its name and is now called the El Carmen Cemetery Association, or La Sociedad Cementerio del Carmen.

Serving the Thlema-Losoya communities, El Carmen Church has grown and evolved as a result of the population increase in the area. Many community activities are based around the church, including seniors meeting every morning to socialize and eat. El Carmen has recently also made improvements to its facility, and these developments have helped the church accommodate the growing population.

Villa Coronado

Villa Coronado by comparison is a more recent community. This area contains a park (the aptly named Villa Coronado Park) with the Father Roman Community Center. Also in the park, next to the community center, is the Wesley Primary Care Clinic. The clinic was opened in 1996 and originally funded by the United Way; in 1999 the Methodists took up sponsorship of the clinic. There are many churches in the area; two of the more prominent are St. Francis Cabrini Catholic Church and Iglesia Bautista Ven a Él. To the east across Highway 281 lies the neighborhood of Alameda, slated for condemnation in order to build the proposed south side campus of Texas A&M University.

Mission del Lago

The Mission del Lago housing complex is one of the newer neighborhoods in the Southside district. Indicative of hopes for coming development on the Southside is the Mission del Lago Golf Course. Although it was developed 16 years ago, it will definitely benefit greatly from the incoming population. The golf course is located near Mitchell Lake, and the Toyota plant is clearly visible from the course. Additional new houses and apartments have all appeared in approximately the past five years.

History of the Southside Independent School District

The first school south of San Antonio was established in 1881 and the first recorded school in the Thelma-Losoya area was the Carmen schoolhouse in 1883. This was a one-room schoolhouse like many other one- and two-room schoolhouses scattered throughout the Southside area as well as a few private schools. One of these private schools was at Mission Espada run by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. One informant recalled her fondness of the school, especially of the nuns, who taught her to crochet, cook, write and sing at an early age.

The school district formed in 1949 as the Southside Rural School District #17. It originally contained a junior and senior high and three elementary schools. In 1964, the district became Southside Independent School District #917.

General Overview of Demographics

Total Population

According to the most recent Census, the area encompassed by the Southside Independent School District (SISD) has a population of around 20,000 people. This is a 61% increase from the same area's population of 12,546 in 1990. When compared to the city's growth of almost 19%, it is obvious that the south side of San Antonio is experiencing growth at a much more accelerated rate than the city as a whole.

TOTAL POPULATION CHANGE			
	1990	2000	Change
Southside ISD	12,546	20,237	61.30%
San Antonio	1,129,154	1,327,554	18.60%

Figure 1. Total Population change: SISD and City of San Antonio 1990-2000

Race and Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, the SISD area experienced an 80% increase in its Hispanic population and a 15.6% increase in its non-Hispanic White population within the same span of ten years. Although, there has been an increase in both of these groups, Hispanics have been increasing at a much faster rate. Similarly, the city as a whole has seen a 27.42% increase in its Hispanic population in contrast to the less than one percent increase in the non-Hispanic white group.

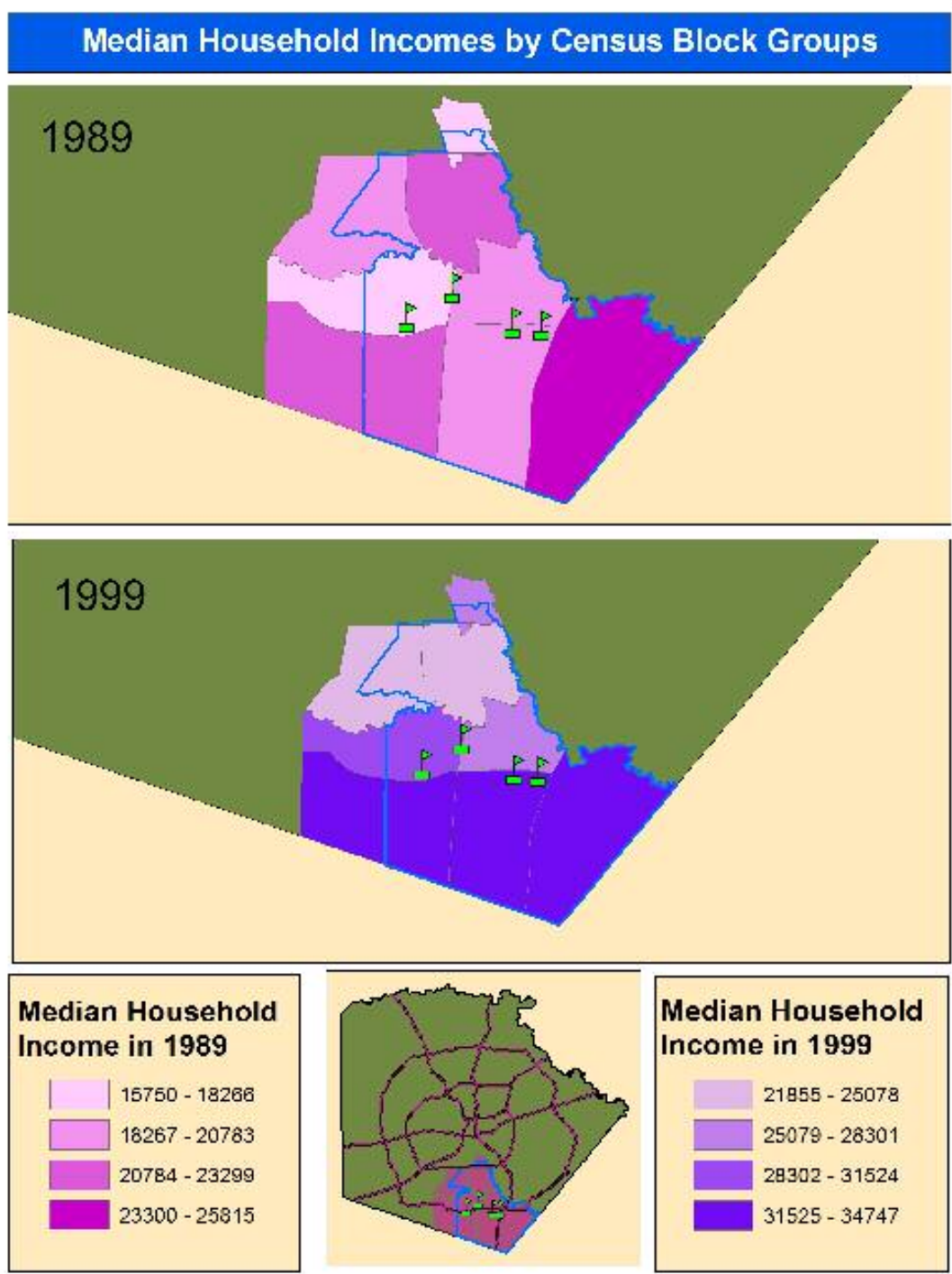
This can have serious implications primarily in terms of language needs for the school district and public services.

Most census block groups¹ in the SISD have about 35 to 50% of students (children between the ages of 5 and 17) who speak Spanish at home. Some areas are as high as 78%. More importantly, out of those who spoke Spanish at home, many speak little or no English. Percentages ranged from as low as 5% to as high as 25%.

Economics

Median household incomes have increased in the Southside region. In the 1990 Census, the median household income ranged between \$15,750 and \$25,815. By 2000, the range was between \$21, 855 and \$34,747, indicating an overall increase in income since in 1990. In Map 2, the darker shades represent the higher income levels. Interestingly, in both censuses the bottom half of the district has either gotten darker (an indication of an increase in median income) or stayed constant. While the upper half of the region has shifted from having darker shades to lighter shades, indicating a decrease in the median household incomes for the census block group. This implies a polarization in the income levels: as the southern part of the district becomes relatively more affluent, the northern area is becoming more impoverished.

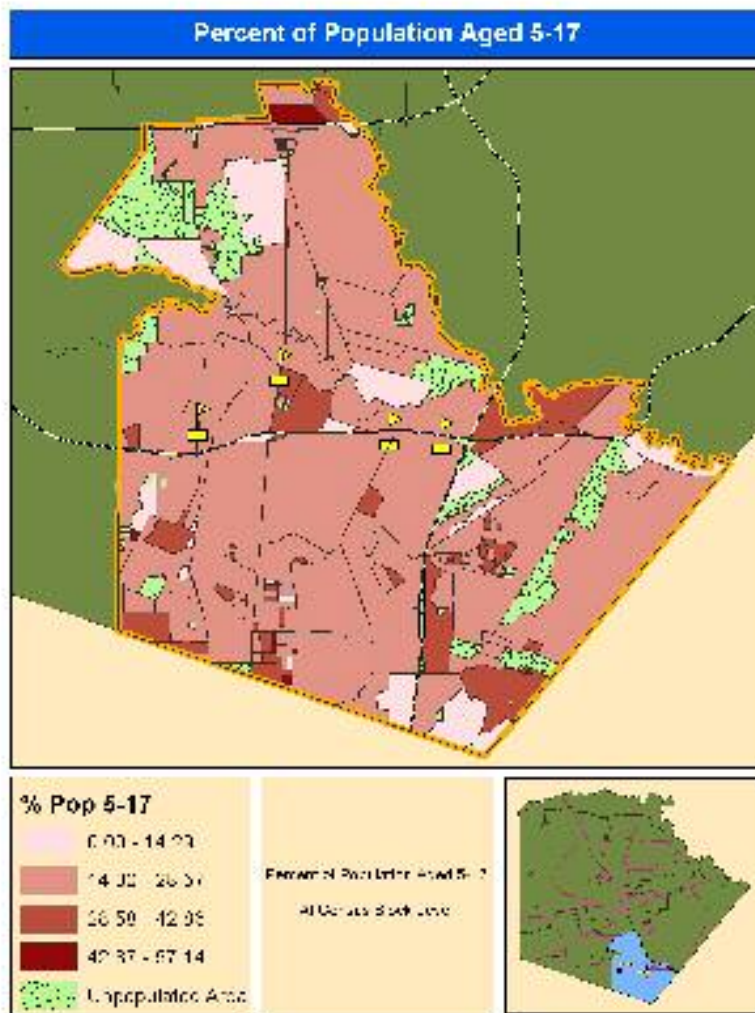
¹ Census Block Groups are the second smallest unit of measurement used by the US Census Bureau. Each block groups consist of smaller blocks which are similar to residential blocks.



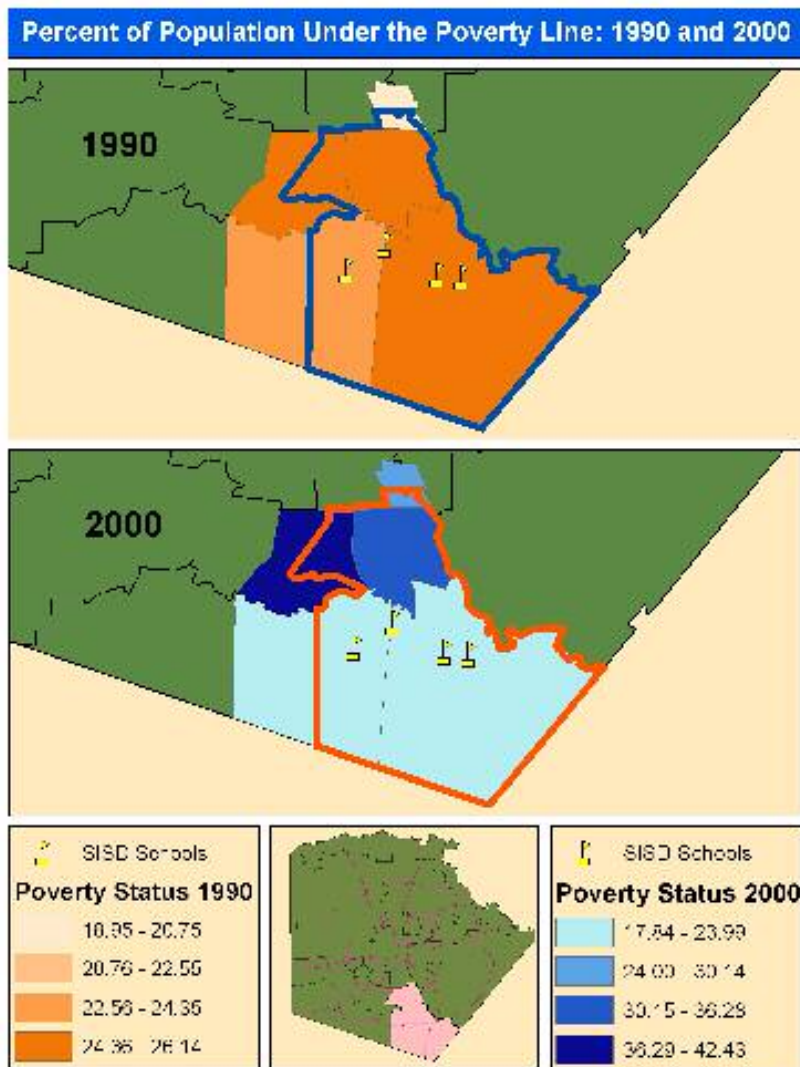
Map 2. Median Household Income in the Southside School District 1989-1999

Percent of Population Aged 5-17

Map 3 shows the percent of the population that is between 5 and 17 years of age. It is graduated, so that darker the area, the larger the percent of the total population is 5-17. This is an especially important reference for schools, because 5-17 years olds comprise the school-age demographic.



Map 3. Percent of Population that is School-Age 2000



Map 4. Percent of the Population in the Southside School District living in poverty 1990-2000

Data in Map 4 compares the total population that is below the poverty line (when controlled for inflation) between 1990 and 2000. At first glance, it appears that there has been a shift from the southern to the northern part of SISD as to where the poverty lies in the district. However, when examining the legends, it becomes clear that the southern part of the school district has not actually

undergone a significant change in poverty density. Instead, the southern part of SISD has remained fairly constant in poverty level, but the north has grown considerably poorer. Between 1990 and 2000, there has been an increase of between 10 and 18 percent of the population living below the poverty line in northern part of the SISD. Map 4 suggests that most students are coming from the less economically advantaged areas of the district.

II. SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY IN THE SOUTHSIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Espada

The Espada community includes many families with deep historical ties to the area, some reaching back over a century or farther. The practice of settling near one's family is common, and thus the neighborhood consists mainly of may related individuals. The recent rise in the cost of land, the buying-out of property by developers, and the eventual rise in property taxes may adversely impact this tradition however, and contribute to the changing face of the historical community. Several residents also expressed the concern that changes would force them to move, even though their families or their spouse's families had lived there for generations.

The Espada Mission is naturally an important center of the community. The mission is a National Historic Park, managed by the National Park Service, and as such attracts tourists. It is unknown whether the perceived increase in

crime in the area can or will have any influence on this, but the issue should be explored. The mission is also the site of Native American rituals, which are performed despite the stares of tourists and others.

Though many residents attend Mass at Espada itself, others, especially more recent immigrants to the area, attend St. Francis Cabrini Church in Villa Coronado. Unsurprisingly, considering its age, the mission itself is quite small and can become easily crowded. Though the atmosphere is more intimate because of it, the crowding may encourage new residents to seek other places of worship. The priest stationed at Espada regularly holds Mass in other places; it may be that the coming growth, depending on its size and location, may force the building of new churches and the introduction of new clergy.

The clergy already serving Espada are forced to deal with the changes brought on by sudden growth. An older resident described feeling annoyed because the church wished to defer more to the younger generation (which, granted, may be necessary). She also felt put out by the fact that the church festival had been moved to a location she could not attend as easily. The concerns of older residents and the desires of younger residents will probably be exacerbated in the coming years.

Thelma/Losoya/El Carmen

Thelma/Losoya/El Carmen is located around the area of 281 and F.M. 1937. This is a historically rich area, with many families whose ancestors have lived in the area for generations. The people of Losoya are very conscious and proud of their history. It is a part of many peoples' everyday lives and, for some,

has influenced their opinions about recent development of the area. Thelma/Losoya is also an extremely active and interconnected community that centers a great deal of its activities around El Carmen Church. Most of the founding families attend this church, and it seems to be a place to build community bonds as well as worship. Employment opportunities in the El Carmen area seem very limited at this time, as development has been slow to come. Currently, many residents commute from their homes to work in the city. This is a long drive to make every day, but the appreciation these residents have for the area make it worthwhile. Others in the area are taking classes at St. Phillip's College in anticipation of the development that is to come. They hope it will give them the opportunity to get jobs at one of the new industries coming into the area, such as the Toyota Plant. This presents the possibility of conflict between the existing residents and those who are moving in specifically to take jobs at these businesses. Many wonder if they will be given the same opportunities as these newer residents.

The Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church is the nucleus of the Losoya/Thelma area. Many of the oldest families from the area have attended this church since its founding in 1817. It is a source of pride for the community, especially after its recent remodeling about three years ago and the appointment of a new priest. Until recently, the church has been very small and close-knit. Within the past two years the number of parishioners has increased dramatically, according to one informant. Two informants stated that the attitude of the church

is usually welcoming to strangers, but with the influx of parishioners there is more indifference than before.

Some believe there is a division between those whose families have lived in the area for years and those who are more recent arrivals. The older families are very influential, and are believed by some to be the reason why the Losoya area has



not yet seen much development. One informant who recently began attending the church expressed the belief that she does not have much of a say about what goes on in the community specifically because she has not lived there for very long. Some members of these more established families, and in general the older members of the community, are hesitant to accept change and development because it is perceived as a threat to their history. Those who are not exactly “embracing the change” realize that it is inevitable; however, many community members are also worried about the changes impending development has already brought. Increased traffic and crime have become a problem in recent years, and many cite these as causes for their wariness. But development will also bring many benefits, and, generally, newer members of the community welcome the changes because of this. Informants cited better roads and improved water, police, and health services as reasons they welcome

development. By reconciling these two views on the impending development, residents of Losoya can take advantage of the positive aspects of development while simultaneously preserving the history and sense of community that made the area what it is today.

Villa Coronado

The Villa Coronado neighborhood is a small residential area tucked into the corner of Loop 410 and Roosevelt Avenue. Villa Coronado will especially be affected by the new growth, because it is located on the intersection of two major highways and across the street from the anticipated A&M campus. The residents in the area are aware that certain changes will be taking place soon, but what they may not know is the extent that these changes will have on their communities and ways of life in areas such as schools, employment, and church. It is difficult to provide an estimate on the profundity of these effects, but the statistics of the community as it is now will perhaps be useful in future studies upon the Southside.

Children living in Villa Coronado normally attend the Southside Independent School District as opposed to their counterparts in Mission del Lago who are sent to magnet schools that are farther away. Informants have told us that the schools in the SISD are filling up rapidly and they are all either at capacity or over capacity. The building of new schools is already in place; however, with the incoming developments and new residents moving into the area, they will inevitably need to build more. Furthermore, it is hard to target where to place these new schools, and the lack of funding makes building

several new schools at a more rapid pace virtually impossible. Most of the high school graduates of the SISD do not go on to college and instead go into the workforce and remain in the area. This is due, according to a key informant, to the financial limitations of Southside families rather than ability or talent.

Villa Coronado may see its demographics change as well with the developments. The few individuals with college degrees presently commute to their jobs that are closer to the downtown San Antonio area. However, more professional workers are expected to be moving in close by to take advantage of the job opportunities with Toyota or A&M as well as the relatively inexpensive real estate. Informants say that there is an abundance of undocumented workers living in the Southside, many of whom live in Villa Coronado. To compensate for their relative poverty, they have formed their own local economy by selling items at the local flea market. Toyota and A&M have created a great deal of excitement among many residents of Villa Coronado with the potential for unskilled job opportunities they will create as well. However, it is unclear to what extent undocumented workers will benefit from the new employment opportunities.

The main churches in Villa Coronado are the San Francisco Xavier Cabrini Church and the Ven a El Iglesia Bautista (Baptist church). These seem to be important gathering points for the residents, allowing them to socialize and worship at least one day out of the week. The vision of a tightly knit community can be sensed, but is questionable as to how long this will last when more newcomers arrive and interrupt their routine lives that they have become used to for so long. Although the Sunday afternoon service did not overcrowd the chapel,

it might become this way as a result of the flow of new residents, which would result in the need for building new churches as places of worship and community hubs.

Mission Del Lago

Mission del Lago (MDL) is a new community on the Southside. It is a community that was recently built around the pre-existing golf course which opened in 1989 on Mitchell Lake. Choice Homes, a Texas corporation, is the prime homebuilder in Mission del Lago, and has already built both apartments and houses in Mission Del Lago. Choice Homes has already completed the first phase of the project, and has another phase in progress. Home owners have begun moving in to the houses of phase one and the houses of phase two are currently being built. The Toyota plant is clearly visible across the lake from the golf course, and the projected number of houses that the Toyota plant will bring in to Mission del Lago is approximately 5000 in the next five years (all from Choice Homes), and 45,000 houses built in the next 10 years in the entire Southside School District. Mission del Lago is useful to look at in this study, because it is one of the first examples of prospective communities and community members that the Toyota plant and A&M campus will bring to the Southside.

Most people in Mission del Lago are sending their children to schools which are not in the Southside school district. A couple who had just moved to Mission del Lago said that they have two children who attend private school downtown so they can be near their mother's work. Another informant from

Mission del Lago said she has two children, and both go to magnet schools outside of the area. Community members did not give reasons for this, but one possible reason is that they do not trust the schools in the area, that they are concerned with adding to the issue of overcrowding, or that they simply have the money to send their children to other schools that they view as “better.”

There has been recent development in education with the rise of communities like Mission del Lago. One informant told us that in the past, only thirty percent of the students were reading at the appropriate grade level and now, ninety percent are. Also, the community is very excited about the advantages that their children may gain from the new development in the area, such as the A&M library (right now they do not have a library in the area). In addition, as housing develops, more teachers and school employees will be moving in.

With church and employment, Mission del Lago community members tend to go outside of the Southside as well. Many people drive a good distance outside of the community to attend church. For example, one informant said she and her family goes to the Corner Stone Church, which is approximately a 40 minute drive, and another informant said that she and her children go to the Mission San Jose church, a 15 minute drive. In work placement, one informant works twenty minutes away from her home in Mission del Lago, another works at the Medical Center (approximately a 35 minute drive), while another couple said that the husband works from their home while the wife works in downtown San Antonio.

Though some of the people that we talked to around Mission del Lago seemed to regard the MDL members as outsiders or “the other,” the people in MDL have reasons for living in the area like most others probably do. The importance of family and history seemed to be the common theme, or was at least mentioned, in the informant’s reasons for moving to Mission del Lago in the first place. One couple said that they used to live in the Harlandale district, but had moved to this home about a week before because they wanted to be closer to family, there is no traffic, the area is beautiful (they have a golf course and wildlife reserve as their backyard), and they expect the property value to increase with the arrival of the new A&M campus. Another informant had grown up ten miles South of the area and went to Southside High. She moved to Mission del Lago because her family was nearby, because it is cheaper than other places, and because there is the possibility of potential growth. Also, one informant used to live a mile down the road from Mission del Lago. She chose to move to her current house because it is bigger and has nicer surroundings. It is also relevant from these informant’s answers that many for the homeowners are originally from the Southside or have family living in the Southside, which many help them to understand the importance of the Southside area and community.

Ethnic Distribution in the Southside: A Comparative Perspective

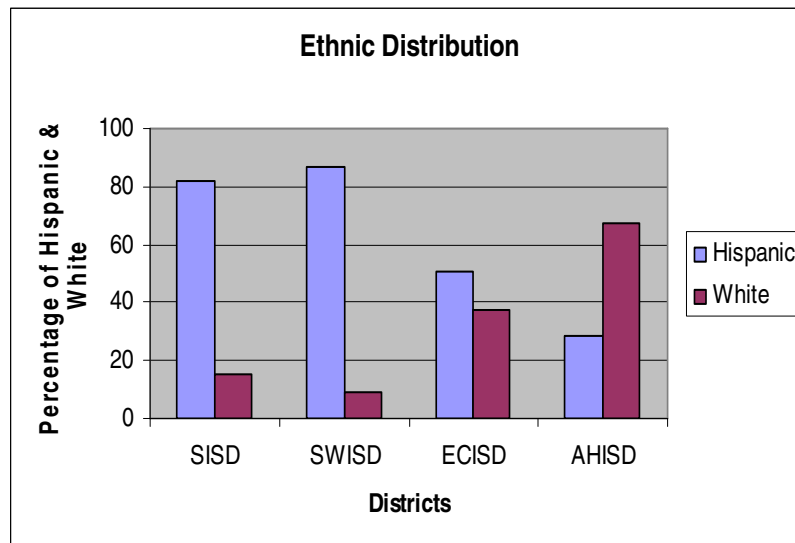


Figure 2. Ethnic Distributions in Various School Districts in the San Antonio area TEA 2003 (A map is included for location.)

Figure 2 compares the ethnic distributions between the Southside, Southwest, East Central, and Alamo Heights Independent School Districts. SISD

is comparable to Southwest and East Central by location and Alamo Heights is the only other district in San Antonio that is comparable by student population. It is evident that the Hispanic student population in SISD is significantly larger than that of whites. Furthermore, when one studies the make-up of Alamo Heights as compared with that of SISD, the numbers are quite clearly reversed; Alamo Heights is 68% White. This large Hispanic population in SISD may point out the need for ESL programs, and bi-linguallanguage faculty

Property Value Per Pupil



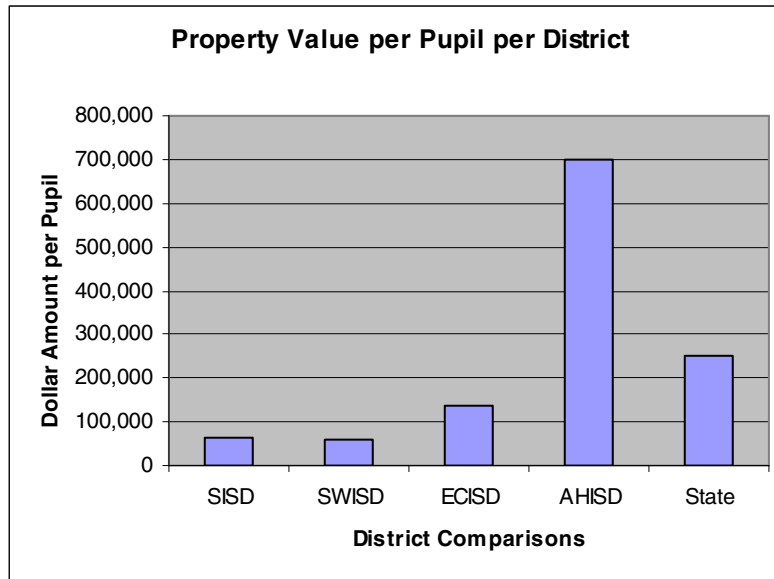


Figure 3. Property Values per Pupil in Various School Districts TEA 2003 (a map is included for location.)

Using the same district comparisons with SISD, it is clear that the property values in the area, while comparable to those of SouthwestISD, are nowhere near the state average of \$249,207 per pupil (3). SISD's property value per pupil is \$66,015, SWISD's is \$60,863, East Central's number get a little closer to that of the state average with \$135,542; however, the most staggering number is that of Alamo Heights with a property value of \$701,590 per pupil.

As we know, property value is the determining factor of education funding for a district. As you can see, Alamo heights has a per pupil property value that is a multiple of the other districts and even of the State average at far right.

Despite this, the graph showing 5th grade TAKS passage rates (figure 4) demonstrate that SISD children are comparable to those of Alamo Heights and the others.

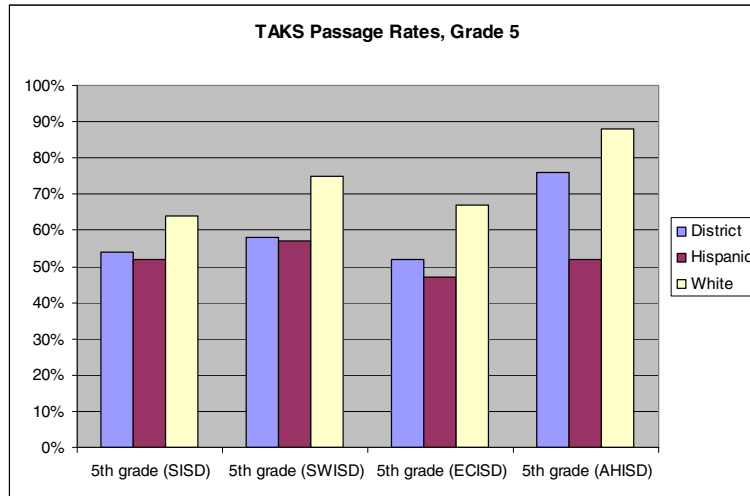


Figure 4. TAKS passage rates (5th grade) for various school districts in San Antonio TEA 2003 (refer to Figure 4 for district location).

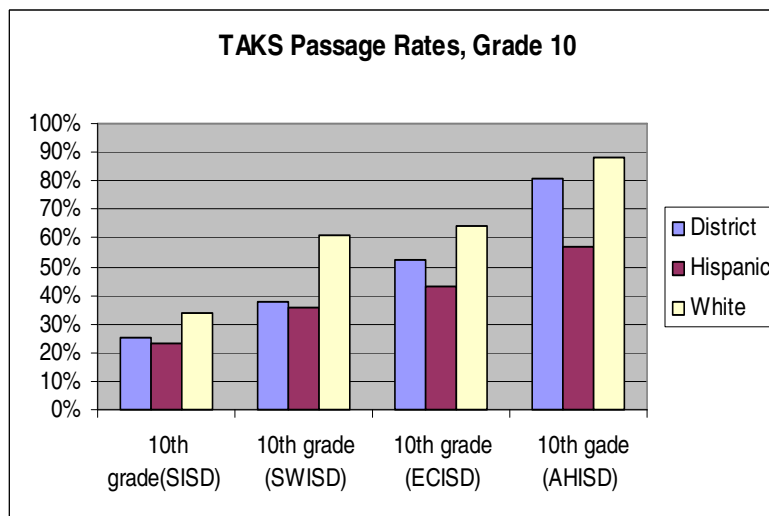


Figure 5. TAKS passage rates (grade 10) for various school districts in San Antonio TEA 2003

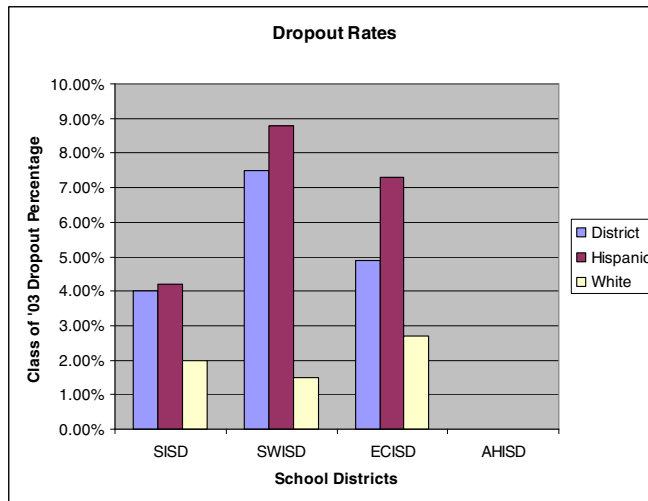


Figure 6. High School Drop Out Rates for various school districts in San Antonio TEA 2003

Unfortunately, the disparity is again apparent in TAKS passage rates by 10th grade. You can see a significant fall in passage rates in South Side compared to Alamo Heights and the others (figure 6).

Perhaps even more telling are the dropout rates; while at a district wide 4% for South Side for the class of 2003, stunningly AHISD has a 0% dropout rate across ethnicities. A possible cause may involve employment (figure6) .

A resident informed us that many men go into the same trades as their fathers, e.g. carpentry; this sort of known career path may decrease the perceived need to finish school. This is only conjecture, however, and requires deeper examination. The very existence of any such tradition, of course, may well be threatened by the potential diminishment of the tradition of settling near one's family. It will be interesting to see what effect new residents will have.

III. SERVICES AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

An integral component of city government is the services it provides to its citizens. Ideally, those services would be fairly allotted to all those who pay taxes and live inside its bounds, but unfortunately, this is not always the case. In talking with residents, there is obviously a feeling of inadequate services and neglect on the part of the City of San Antonio. Determining what services Southside residents should be receiving is a complicated task, due to the fact that only a small portion of the district lies in San Antonio, with most of the district in Bexar County alone. To make things more complicated, the area designated as CitySouth is in transition to be annexed, further muddying the issue of what services, and within what time frame, the city should be providing (refer back to Map 1 on page 6 for these political demarcations).

Many people of the Southside area have grown to deal with scarce resources, little room for opportunity, and unfair social justice and protection. In hearing these concerns and mapping the various opportunities we can hopefully start to understand their perspectives on the divisive issues. This leads to question if the upcoming development in the Southside will be able to please the people that reside there and rectify these situations.

Basic Needs and City Services

Many residents in Villa Coronado have difficulty paying City Public Service bills, forcing some to use illegal power connections. If fuel costs rise, more residents may live without power and running water. Eventually, most will be cut-off. One area social worker uses her many contacts to find donors to help the

area's poor pay their bills. She also runs her own food and clothes bank. Though few people take advantage of the opportunity, she believes that many people in Villa Coronado are willing to help the community. When asked about the success of these donation programs, she replied, "All you have to do is ask." Because relatively few outreach programs exist in the community outside of Villa Coronado's churches (San Francisca Xavier Cabrini and Ven a E) , it is unclear whether these programs have the resources to meet the community's needs should the residents take advantage of the opportunity. These programs are "untested."

In Espada, many residents spoke of problems accessing gas, water, electricity, and proper drainage. One spoke at great length of the issues she has with the city and the developers. When her family moved into their current house 24 years ago, they could not access natural gas, sewers, or drainage. There are still problems with sewers and drainage. She said little was provided until the bike trail came- then the city realized the area was an embarrassment. Only then did they address those issues, but not out of concern for the people. "Unless the city is interested in your area, they won't give you the things you need." She said that the city is making a mess for itself by planning all of these things on the Southside before taking care of the basics for daily life. "They should have taken care of roads and things before developing." Most residents felt forgotten until the city had something to gain (as with future development).

El Carmen residents reported much of the same. One informant said the biggest issue locals face is the rising cost of taxes corresponding with rising

property values. Some individuals still use a backyard water-well for amenities, even though one woman admitted the water is of terrible quality. The water well is used out of necessity because they don't offer city water where she lives. This same informant feels neglected by the San Antonio Metropolitan area; she feels area residents don't receive the amenities that they need. .

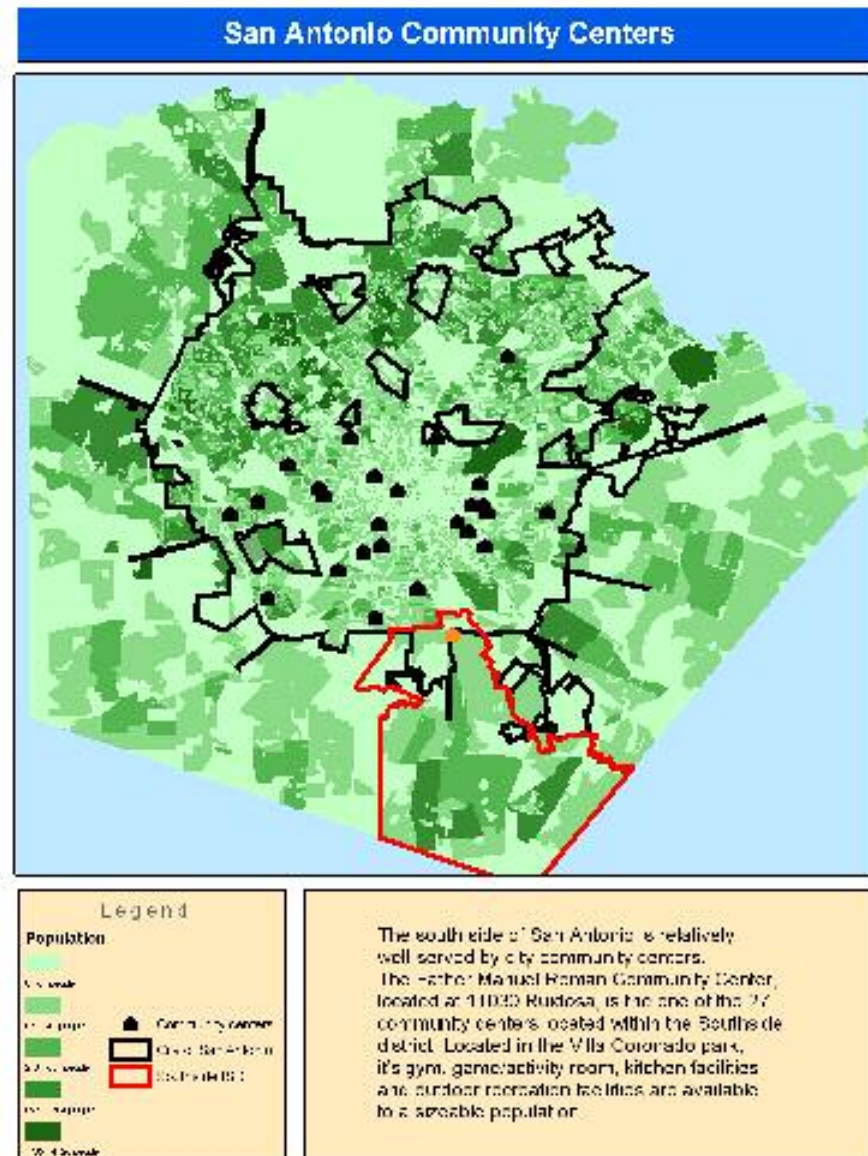
Transportation

The area's infrastructure and public transportation system is not capable of absorbing the needs of the coming flux of people and businesses. Bus #42's southern-most stop is the Losoya schools. It does not go further south than Socorro in Villa Coronado during weekends. This single bus-line which carries an average of 3,308 riders per week is the only form of public transportation in the area. Some teachers and faculty members from the local schools transport their students to and from school. Many residents do not have rides to work or school because of the limited routes and schedules. One El Carmen resident remarked on this lack of public transit when asked about her two children. They, unlike other local kids have moved out of the area to attend school and have not since returned. Her children come out to see her every once in a while but she doesn't like the fact that it's an inconvenience for her children to come and visit her because of the lack of public transportation; she really feels ostracized from the city. She also spoke of increased vehicular traffic in the area.

Community Services

The south side of San Antonio is served by one community center: The Father Manuel Roman Community Center at 11030 Ruidosa (Map 5). Located in

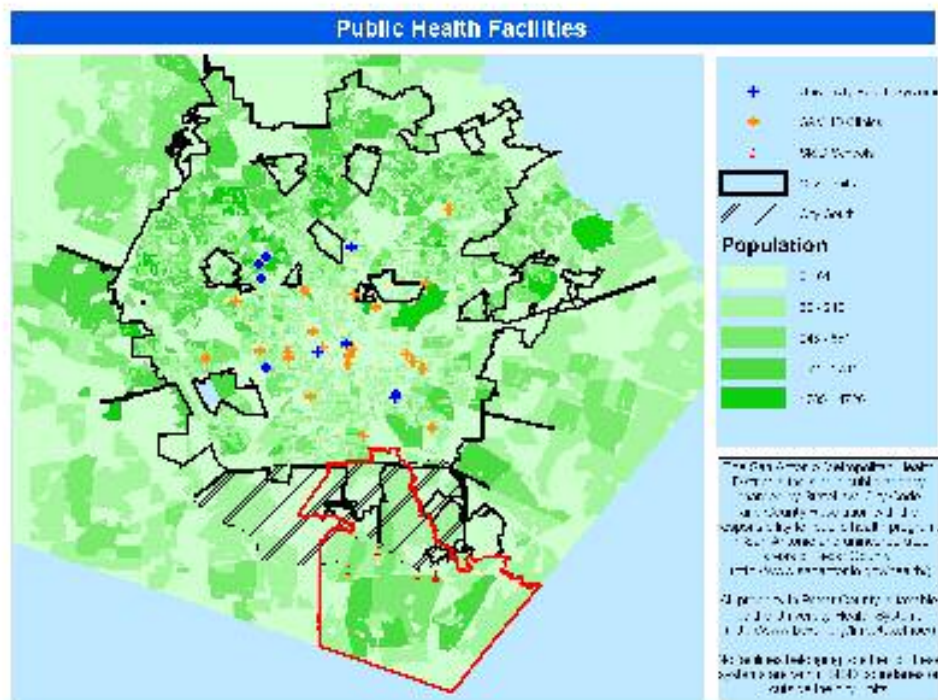
the Villa Coronado Park, its gym, game/activity room, kitchen facilities and outdoor recreation facilities are available to a sizeable population. As previously stated, the community center is valuable locus of activity for the Villa Coronado neighborhood.



Map 5. Community Centers in San Antonio.

Libraries are city amenities, paid for by city taxes and not expected to be provided to those outside San Antonio's borders. However, a small portion of the northern part of the district does pay taxes to the city and it appears as though even that small population is underserved (Map 6). The three closest branch libraries are McCreless Library, the Pan American Library and the Cortez Library. High school students must drive between 8-10 miles to reach any of these three branches closest to them. With plans in the works to annex more of the SISD through the CitySouth initiative, the need for library services in the south side of San Antonio is even more urgently underscored. Once Texas A& M opens their library, residents will have access to this opportunity. It is a positive result of the development, but one seen very far in the future. One residents' feeling on the matter was, "City council's just thinking develop, develop, develop." Who's going to watch out for the people?"

Care at 19780 S. Hwy 281. Wesley Primary Care Clinic opened in 1996 and offers low-cost treatment to patients that earn less than \$12,000 a year. The clinic is sponsored by Methodist Ministries provides some medical care. A local social worker estimated that 75% of the patients are undocumented. To overcome the area's transportation problem, the clinic picks up some of the elderly patients. La Mission Clinic is run by The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and does offer services on a sliding fee scale. Everyone in Bexar County pays taxes to the University Health Systems, but no facilities exist to serve the area (Map 7).



Map 7. Public Health Facilities in San Antonio

Crime and Emergency Services

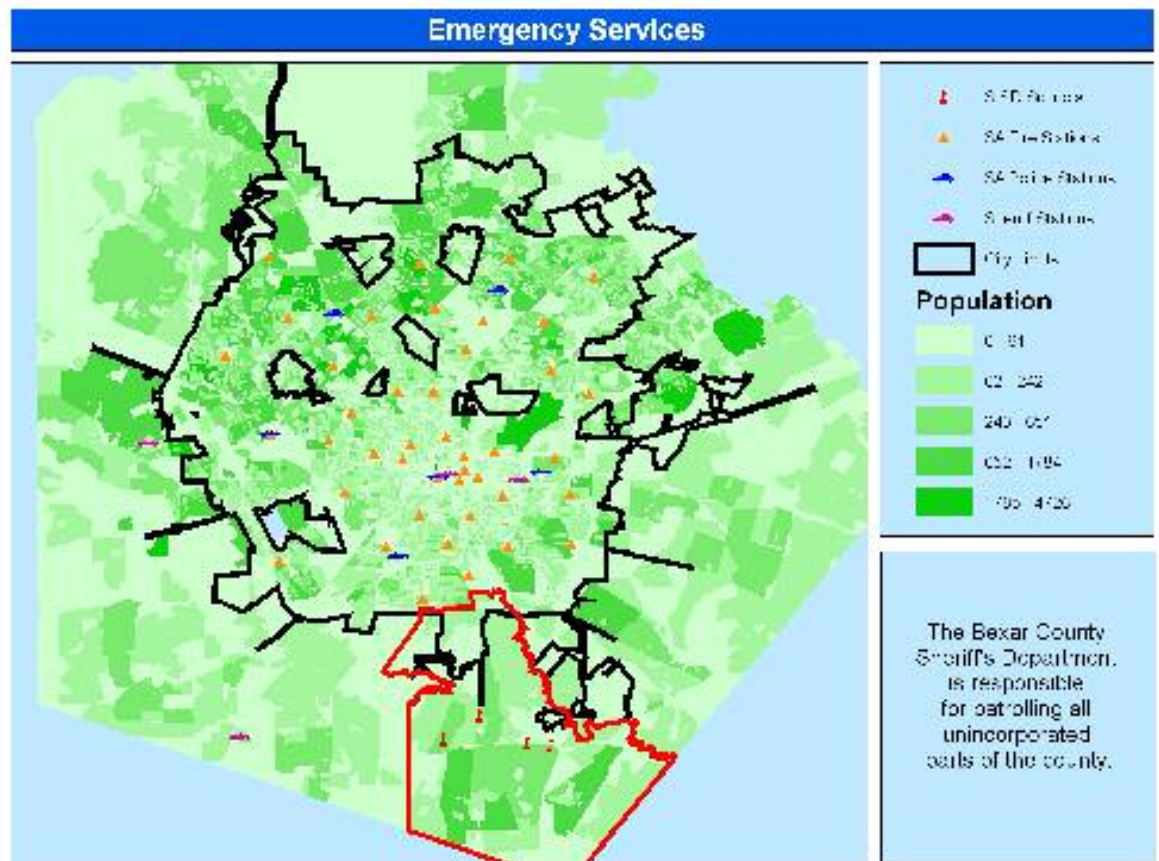
To overcome their relative poverty, many residents have entered an informal local economy. Many in the Villa Coronado sell Mexican imports at the flea market. Others turn to selling drugs. The public park in Villa Coronado is a prominent location for drug sales. Crime has spilled over into the adjacent clinic: it has been burglarized twice since its opening.

New growth brings new concerns; for instance, in Espada, a largely closely-knit population, the feeling is that very little has changed until recently. Now with incoming development, there are new faces. And with their location next to a historical landmark- increased tourism and recreation, community members find themselves fearful where they previously felt secure. The residents often expressed fear or annoyance at people moving into new developments as though these people would hurt the community. They spoke of rising crime and security issues from new people in the area as well as those using the river and mission. Community members often felt they had useful input to give to those developing or interested in the area but that no one listened to them. Overall, the residents seem to be trying to strike a balance between enjoying new amenities and protecting their traditions.

One resident said that in the past “there wasn’t too much going on because everyone is related.” Since this was an admittedly safe neighborhood, the police rarely drove through. Things seem to be changing, but she doesn’t feel that the police have acknowledged this and begun treating Espada like a community to patrol. She said that the community had recently found bodies

dumped into the river. After Fiesta last year, a naked and bloody man came through the neighborhood saying that several men had attacked him down by the river. Recently, two 13 14 year old girls knocked on their door and asked her husband to take them home. She said that at night she can sometimes hear girls screaming and shotguns being fired. She also said that most of the problem kids are from Villa Coronado and that on the first of the month one can see them walking around Villa selling drugs. Their delinquent activity spills over into Espada. She said that in spite of being a tourist attraction one find little security after hours at Espada Mission

One fairly standard sentiment was expressed by a resident whose house was burgled last year, she said, “I’m afraid to go out now that there are lots of people we don’t know.” What services are available to deal with this perceived crime growth? Map 8 illustrates the complexity of emergency services in the area. Because the SISD overlaps both city and county jurisdictions, services are divided between different providers, and often residents are unsure whom they should call for services. The nearest city police substation is well to the north of the district and the nearest sheriff’s office to the far west.



Map 8. Emergency Services

Commercial Development

Previous illustrations show that Southside ISD and its residents are currently underserved by city and county public services. This section will illustrate that this pattern continues into the private sector as well. A new McDonalds and Bill Miller BBQ may bring a few jobs but will not have any significant impact on the overwhelming unemployment. The upcoming Texas A&M Campus will run along the Southeast edge of Villa Coronado on Saenz,

Santa Rita, and the edge of Chavaneaux Streets. The Toyota plant will be only several miles away. These facilities are currently accepting job applications.

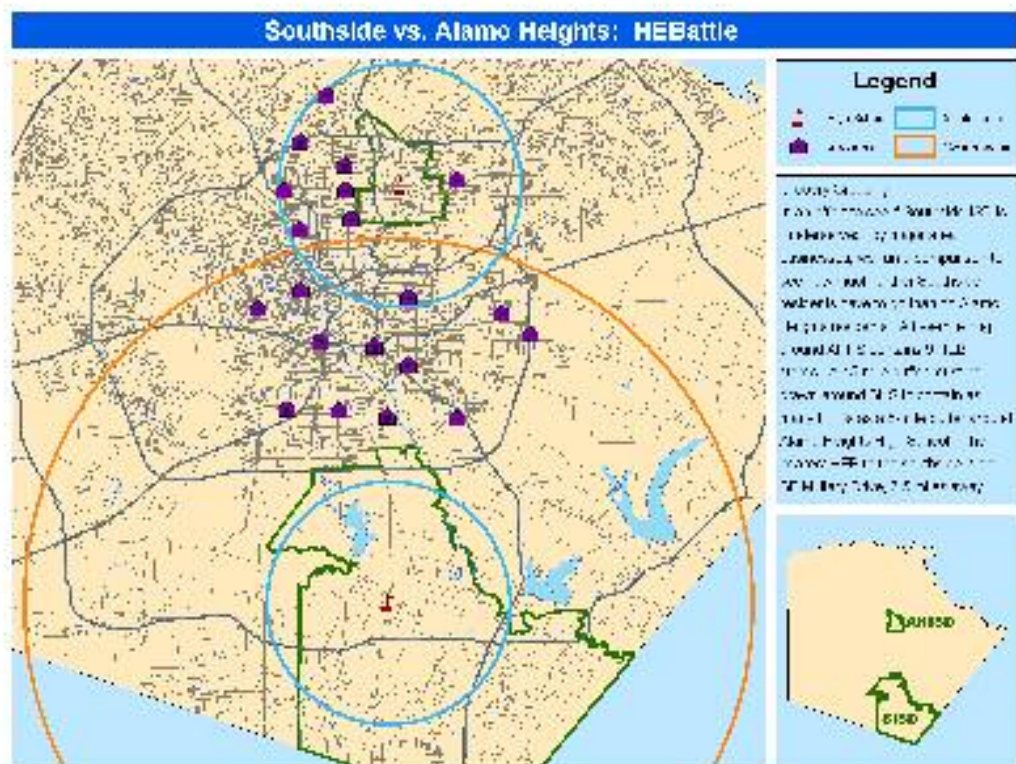
In Espada, most people apparently work for the city, HEB, or are self-employed. Families are extremely closely knit and everyone seems to know everyone else. Work does seem difficult to find and the residents are no longer supported by the land. People live modestly. One informant expressed concern that there was almost too much family togetherness in the area. She has encouraged her sons to get out on their own because staying in Espada is “turning them into alcoholics.” Many members expressed desires that their children branch out and find opportunities elsewhere, though this rarely occurs. Another informant remarked with a bit of trepidation that the new development means, “we’re talking about Starbucks and snow cone stands here.” He does realize it can be “a cool thing” especially in terms of jobs. He said he hears “75% positive comments, 20% who will be happy as long as they can keep up with the development (especially in terms of new facilities), and 5% are very mad.”

One El Carmen informant related that her feelings about the community have deteriorated because of the dilapidation that surrounds her, she noted that her kids “are not proud of the community.” She still tries to add to the community by doing things like “keep[ing] the money in the community.” Several informants complained that the closest grocery store to the area was 7½ miles away. One informant noted that there is no food delivery service (i.e. Pizza delivery) for the area. One resident of the El Carmen area was notably excited about the recent addition of a McDonalds not far away from her house. This McDonalds isn’t even

a full fledged McDonalds, but rather a hybrid Corner-store with an attached McDonalds. She says there's "not enough money out here" and that "nobody wants to come eat in this poor of an area".

One informant associated with Heritage Elementary school said students met with the Mayor and complained they had to travel 20 minutes just to get to a bookstore. "We read too," was their feeling. Their interview with the mayor may have contributed to the opening of a new bookstore in an area mall. Several informants are very excited about commercial developments in the area with the new job market growth being one of the most noted perks.

One of the most ubiquitous and characteristic businesses of San Antonio is HEB Food Stores. The grocery chain holds a virtual monopoly on food sales in the county, and as such is the sole provider of consumables to most local residents. But are the HEB stores distributed around the city evenly enough to serve as many area residents as possible? The answer is unequivocally no (Map 9). Despite the idea that groceries are a necessity to all citizens, it would appear that HEBs cater more specifically to some city residents than others.



Map 9. Where are the HEBs and How Many People do They Serve?

Remembering from previous discussion that the populations of the Southside Independent School District and Alamo Heights Independent School District are roughly equivalent, it would be reasonable to suspect that each would have roughly equivalent access to an HEB. One glance at the map, however, soundly refutes this notion. Within five miles of Alamo Heights High School, nine HEB stores are in operation; yet when the same five-mile-radius circle is superimposed over Southside High School, no HEBs appear. In fact, in order to contain the same number of HEB locations as are within just five miles of AHHS, one must draw a circle around SHS with a radius of almost fifteen miles.

A simple πr^2 calculation reminds us that the fifteen-mile-radius circle, which encompasses virtually the entirety of southern Bexar County and extends north of downtown, contains nine times the area that the Alamo Heights circle contains. Thus, nine times the area, and roughly nine times the population are served by only as many groceries as the neighborhoods around Alamo Heights.

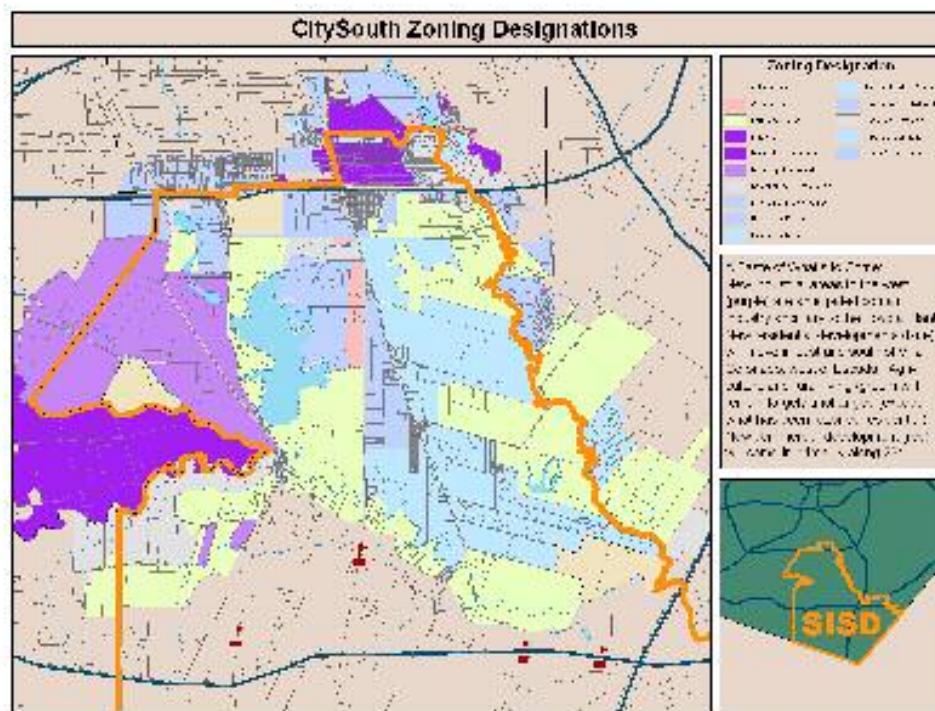
This certainly seems to support the theory of under-provision of resources to the south-side of the county, both by public servants and private companies.

Zoning Issues

Though the CitySouth area has yet to be fully incorporated into the city proper, this has not stopped San Antonio from exerting its influence over the area. Despite the common concerns that CitySouth residents have no representation at San Antonio City Hall, pay no taxes to the city, receive no services from the city, and have in virtually no way been included in the discussion concerning their collective future, the City of San Antonio is already hard at work rezoning the partially-annexed area and drawing up plans for revolutionary change.

Zoning ordinances already passed by City Hall draw an interesting map of the south-side (Map 10). It appears that much of what has made this region unique and rural in feel has been zoned to undergo development. The map of current CitySouth zoning designations illustrates the area between Loop 410 and Loop 1604 that falls within Southside ISD, effectively the northern half of the district. Areas indicated in purple will be the new industrial developments

(denser development, such as the Toyota plant, is indicated by a darker shade of purple). These areas are primarily located west of Lake Mitchell in areas that are not currently densely populated. Perhaps the biggest change illustrated by the zoning map will be the rise of residential developments, indicated in blue (darker blue indicates denser residential development). Many areas that are currently farms and cattle-land will be developed for new residential subdivisions and neighborhoods. The remaining rural and agricultural territory is indicated in green on the map. Much to the dismay of many area residents, the only commercial and retail development slated for the area is indicated by the narrow band of red that extends for about a mile along Highway 281 South.

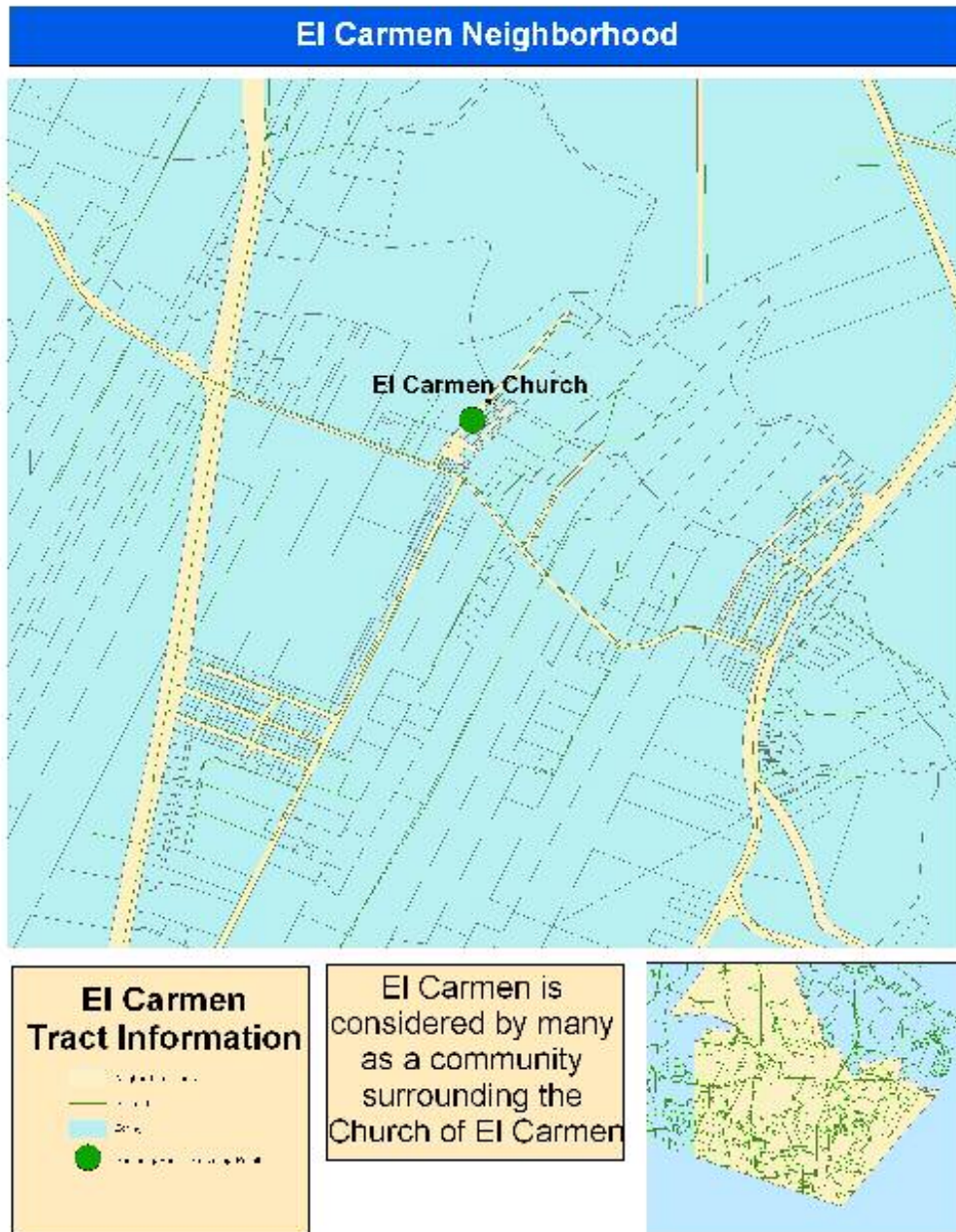


Map 10. CitySouth Zoning Designations

One interesting item to note is the conspicuous absences of both the proposed Texas A & M campus, which has been rumored to wish to locate immediately between Villa Coronado and the police academy (east of Pleasanton Road, west of Highway 281, and just south of Loop 410) and the Andrés Duany master-plan community which early talk has indicated may fall between Villa Coronado (to the west) and Mission Espada (to the east) over about 80 acres that the map splits between residential and rural development.

IV. Current and Future Land Use in Southside ISD

Land Use Issues in Thelma/Losoya/El Carmen



Map 11. El Carmen Neighborhood

Known by outsiders as the El Carmen, the locals refer to the area around the church as Losoya. Most members of the community live within a short distance to the church, but there are some people further from the church that consider themselves members of the community. The community is made up of mostly smaller houses and properties, but the houses in the area range between fairly new (built in the last 15-10 years) and generations old.

Like the Losoya region, the El Carmen church has grown and evolved as a result of the population increase in the area. The church has been a symbol for the community for over a hundred years and continues to act as a rallying point.

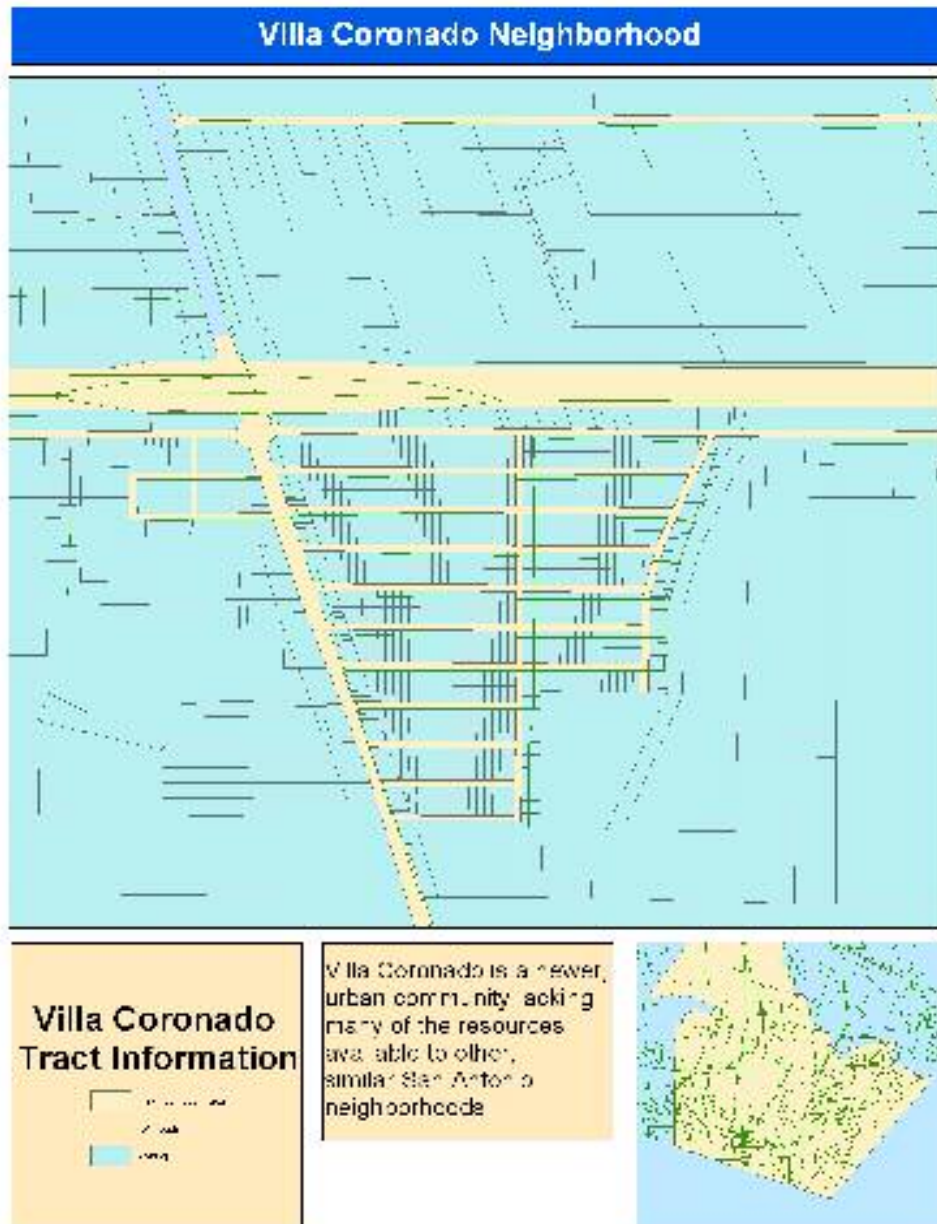
Increased interest in this particular area of land has caused families to sell larger properties and move to smaller ones in the same area. Land speculation has also caused rumors of precious materials in the ground. One of the senior residents mentioned that a friend spent thousands of dollars digging for uranium, but much to his dismay after years of digging nothing was found. El Carmen has seen more involvement from the community and larger attendance at Masses due to the population influx over the last several years. Older members of the area seem to have a harder time accepting new members into the community; younger locals see the change as unavoidable and seem to have begun to accept it. As a result, older members of the community have formed stronger relationships and bonds; evidence of this can be seen from the daily gathering of seniors at El Carmen mentioned above.

Due to the fact that the local school and Catholic Church are in the same area, the Losoya region was one of the first to become more developed. Most of

the large plots of land have already been sold, but there are a few families that retain their land; and while there are some locals that are not affected as much by the development they too still see this growth as a threat. Locals report more cul-de-sacs have appeared within the last few years, a sure sign of increased development in the area. Some larger plots of land remain undeveloped in the area between Leal Road and S. Flores Road, a relatively large piece of land that would seem to have great development potential.

Concerning future development in Losoya the locals have very high hopes. They expressed a lot of excitement about the addition of the Texas A&M campus. With this addition the locals believe that there will be increased opportunity for education and potential for occupation at the university. They however did not seem as excited about the addition of the Toyota plant. They seemed to think that the plant will bring more people to the area, but those who are already living in the area will not benefit because of the qualifications for occupation at the plant. With the area school and the local church less than a mile apart the Losoya area appears to be a prime candidate for increased land development.

Land Use Issues in Villa Coronado



Map 12. Villa Coronado Neighborhood

Villa Coronado is composed of a mixture of older and newer homes. Newer homes have been constructed by the same residents who have always lived there and are not a product of recent arrivals.

Development within the Villa Coronado community for the time being is largely in terms of the incoming A&M campus. Because A&M will be located directly across 281/Roosevelt in Alameda, opinions for and against the large-scale development project are strong. Those in favor of A&M believe that unskilled workers will have the opportunity to get maintenance and janitorial jobs at A&M and other jobs at incoming businesses. One woman at Heritage Elementary finds the idea of A&M appealing, because she explained that “it will bring an aesthetic value to the neighborhood”. It will not just be a beautification process either she thought but will also help lower crime rates due to increased security.



Among those opposed to A&M, several are skeptical as to whether there will actually be as many job opportunities as people say; if not, there will be a large number of disappointed people still without work. Aside from employment possibilities, those living or owning businesses in the area where A&M will be

located have already been notified their property will be purchased. Meetings have been held in the Recreation Center in Villa Coronado regarding the incoming campus, yet only those who received invitations (and therefore will be bought out) were allowed to attend.

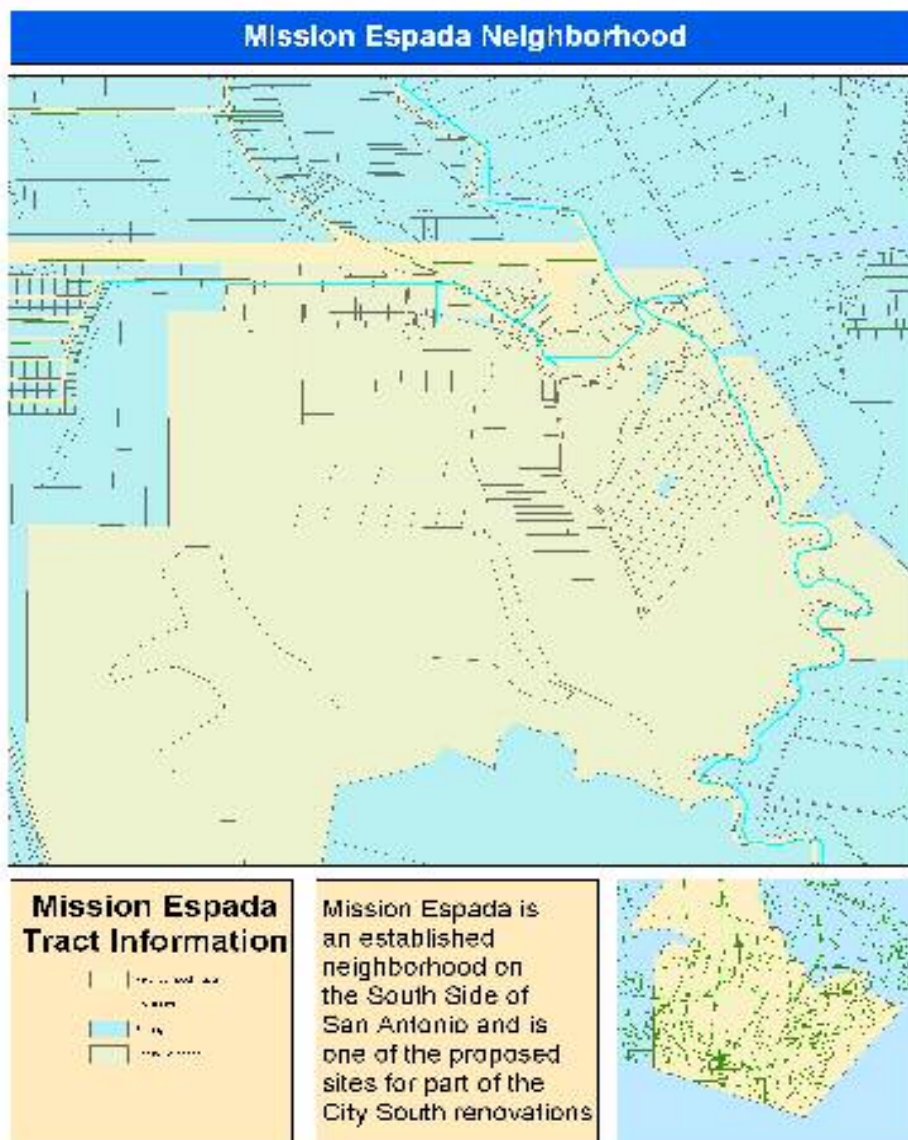


An older man whose property will be bought informed a woman at the Dental Clinic that he refuses to sell. San Francisca Xavier Cabrini Church included as part of their prayer one Sunday a mention of the people who will be losing their homes and businesses to A&M. The Priest asked that the families be kept in everyone's prayers as they make difficult decisions about where to move to and how to react to such invasive changes.



With so many changes taking place in the Southside, residents may take advantage of the incoming economic opportunities if the local government and A&M developers perceive the residents of Villa Coronado as participants in the development process rather than as obstacles to the area's growth. Residents' uncertainty and suspicion of the incoming A&M campus will likely grow if they are not given an equal voice in the coming developments to their community. The imperialistic appearance that sudden changes to the Southside communities and Villa Coronado have had on residents leave them in an ambiguous position as to what will become of their increasingly encroached upon community.

Land Use Issues in Mission Espada



Map13. Mission Espada Neighborhood

Only within the last three decades have the residents of Espada enjoyed such basic amenities as modern sewage and drainage systems, and centralized gas lines. In fact, across 410 from the community, in an area that the residents

have deemed “Little Mexico” outhouses and private butane tanks can still be seen.

Only after a mountain bike trail was installed along the River was the community considered for services that the rest of San Antonio had long since enjoyed. Many of the community members have vocalized their opinion that the installations were only carried out because Espada was an embarrassing sight to all of the visitors of the bike trail.

Even now the community relies heavily on the acequias that were constructed more than 200 years ago by the original inhabitants of the mission to ease flooding in the area. Originally these irrigation ditches were used to transport water from the river to the many fields being used for agriculture. Now that these fields are primarily not in use except for occasionally harvesting hay, they have become primitive drainage ditches losing their rich history to the untrained mission visitors. The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has also attempted to abate the threat of constant flooding by dredging, widening, and cementing the river.

These improvements are a good start, but just a few hundred yards downstream the river it returns to its original state, creating a bottlenecking effect. This has in turn increased the consistency and intensity of the flooding along with changing the general flooding patterns. One resident explained that now the water travels around the community and comes in from the side opposite the river. Eager for help, the residents have relinquished all rights of development to SARA. While they still have limited property rights, they no longer can develop

the areas of their plots adjacent to the river; this includes building fences, or any other structures.

The community is also of course experiencing pressure from outside of Espada as more people from downtown purchase property. Even a group of Bankers from Austin have purchased a plot of land in anticipation of development. To add to this, the individual land holdings are becoming smaller and smaller as original holdings are being divided further within families. Now families are being pressured to sell their plots. One resident claimed that they were offered \$3,500 for each of their two acres. After rejecting the offer, an agreement was reached at \$18,000 per acre.

Land Use in Mission Del Lago



The Mission del Lago housing complexes are definitive of the development that is taking place on the Southside of San Antonio. The incoming population further adds to the changing demographics within the area. Although the houses are much more expensive than those in the surrounding

communities, many of the residents have ties to the historical communities. Most of the residents said that their reasons for moving to Mission del Lago were based on safety, better housing, and the hope that property values will soon increase due to the surrounding development. Contacts at Texas A&M stated that university officials and professors will be residing in the area, so once again it is easy to see that Mission del Lago is situated for prime growth in the next decade.

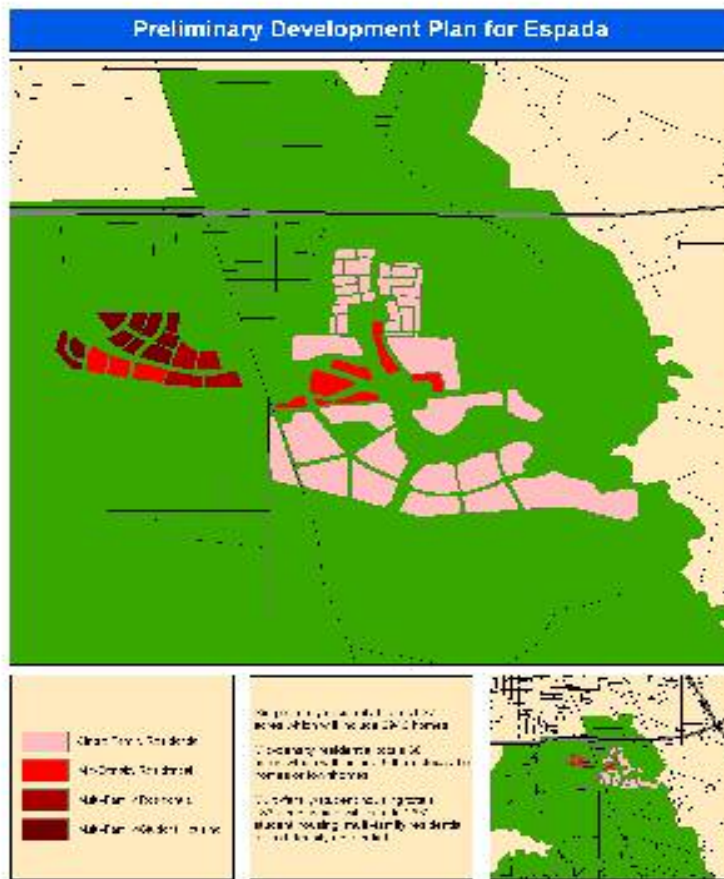
The Mission del Lago Golf Course is a further indicator of the development in the area. Established sixteen years ago, the golf course is located on Mitchell Lake. While most guests hail from the north side of San Antonio, the golf course manager was optimistic about the surrounding development's impact on the course's business. According to his information, Choice Homes is planning on putting in 5,000 homes within the next five years, and within the next few decades, there will be 45,000 new homes in the SSISD. Also notable is the Toyota factory, which is clearly visible across the lake from the course.



Future Developments for the Southside

The proposed maps of CitySouth's Espada Development (different from Mission Espada) represent a preliminary version of what the planned community may look like (see map 14). Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, the architectural firm enjoined by the city of San Antonio to redevelop CitySouth's Espada area, held a five day charette starting Wednesday, April 27, 2005 in which members of the local community could voice their opinions regarding what type of development they would like to see within this particular community. The firm's reputation is that of creating high density (and high dollar) neighborhoods designed to minimize the need for the automobile. Most everyday amenities (including groceries, restaurants, drugstores, etc) are easily accessible and within a five minute walking distance. For more specific information on Duany

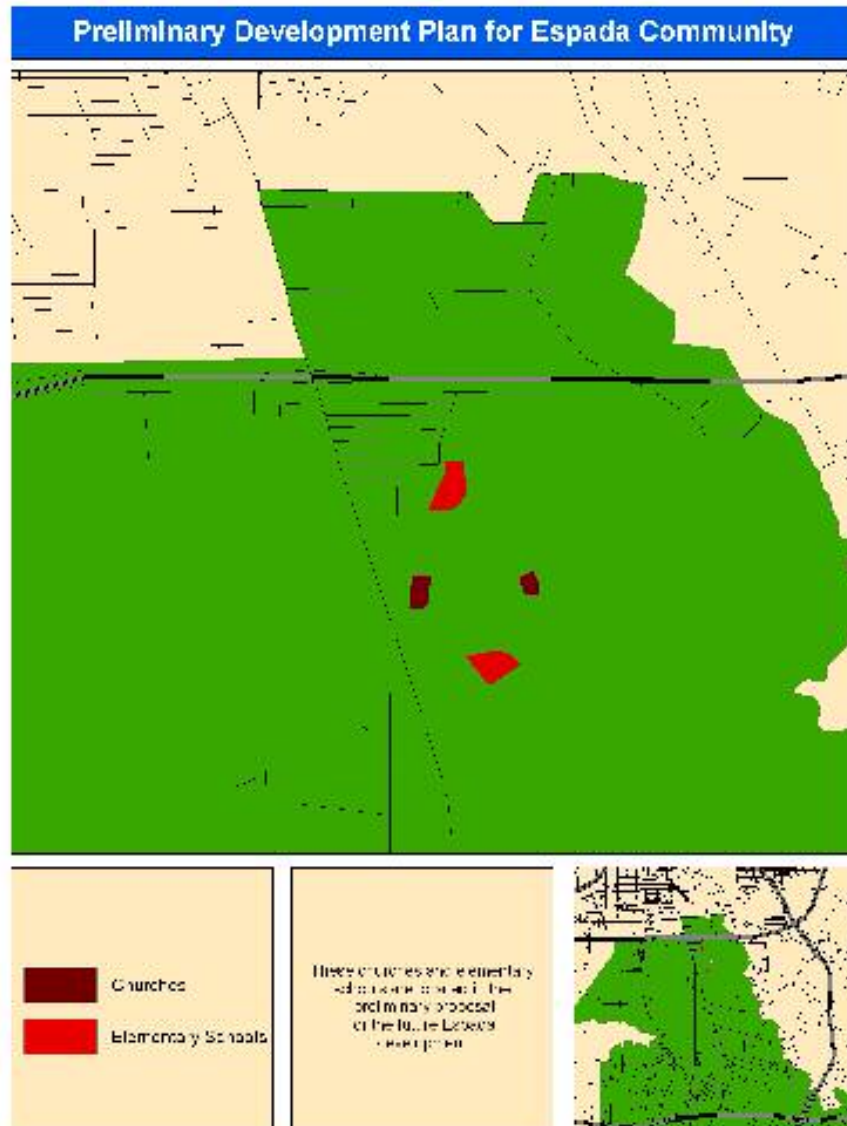
Plater-Zyberk & Company visit their website at <http://www.dpz.com/>.



Map 14. Land Use Development Plans for Espada

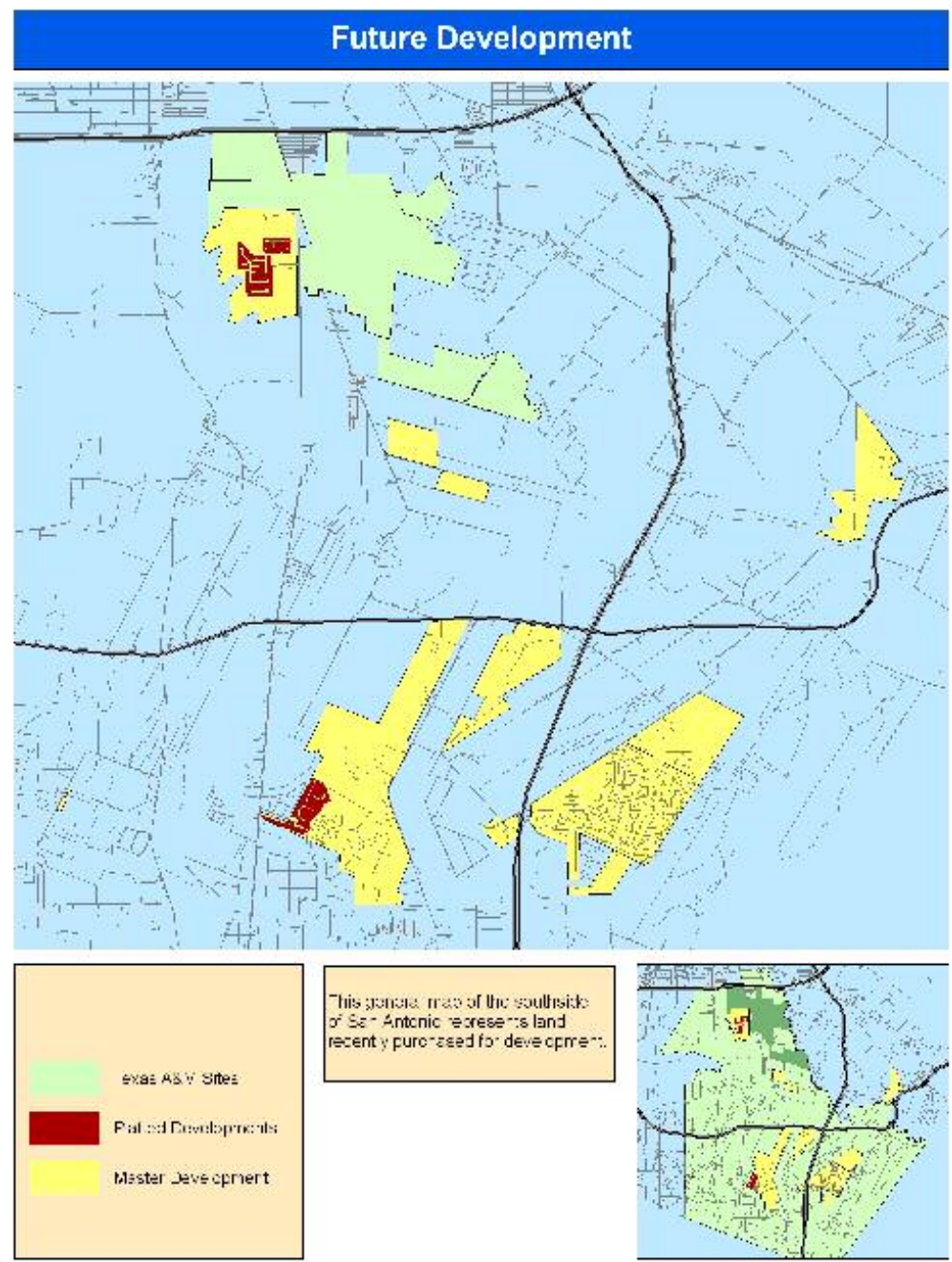
Map 14 shows the preliminary residential development plan for CitySouth Espada. The areas with the lightest shade of red represent the plan for single family residential which totals 637 acres and includes 2,946 homes. The area with the next deepest shade of red represents area planned for mid-density residential which will total 60 acres and will include 600 duplex/patio homes or town homes. The next two shades of red represent multi-family residential and multi-family/student housing, respectively. This totals 133 acres and will include a mix of either mid-density and multi-family residential or multi-family residential

and student housing, respectively. The area in green represents the Southside Independent School District. The highway to the North of this preliminary development plan is Loop 410. Highway 281 cuts through the middle of this development.



Map 15. Proposed Churches and Schools for Espada Neighborhood

Map 15 represents the preliminary proposal for the future Espada development. The darker shade of red represents the potential areas for churches and the lighter shade of red signify the possible area for elementary schools. The area in green represents the Southside Independent School District. The highway to the North of this preliminary development plan is Loop 410.



Map 16. Future Development in the Northern Portion of SISD

Map 16 represents all known future development in Southside ISD. All areas shaded in yellow indicate future master developments which will include

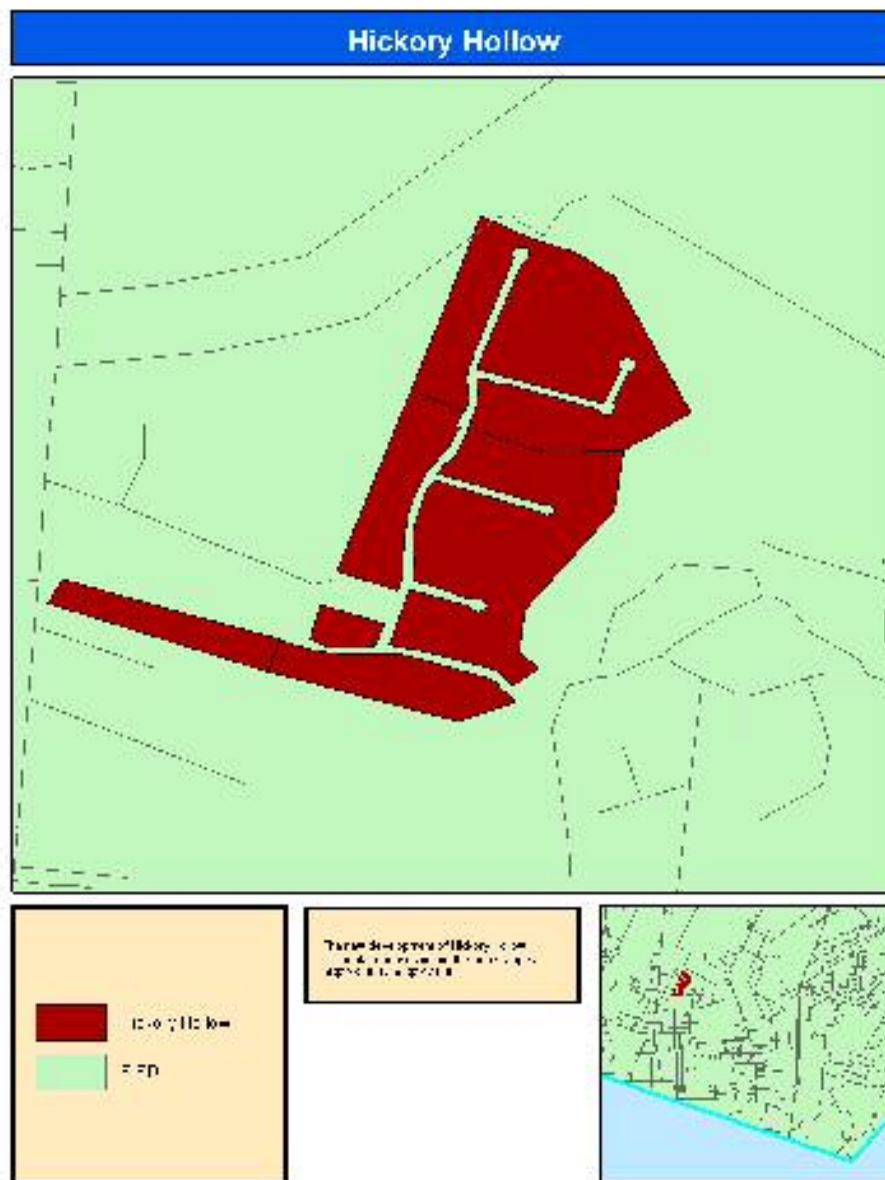
single family homes. The areas shaded red within these zones are those that have been recently platted. These communities are in the initial phases of construction and include Mission Del Lago to the north and Hickory Hollow south of Loop 1604. Also included on the list of residential communities are Blue Lake Estates to the far east and a sizeable undeveloped portion of Waterwood (pictured southeast). The section of the map shaded green represents the future location of Texas A&M University. Note that within all these zones of future growth only a minimal amount of construction has begun in comparison with what is eventually planned.



Map 17. Development near Mission del Lago

The Mission Del Lago community (map 17) just recently doubled in size with the redrawing of plats to include lateral expansions on the northern side of the development as well as a southward expansion. Choice Homes is the sole builder on the area that lies north of Del Lago Parkway. Prices in this part of the

neighborhood range from \$90,000 for an 1100 square foot home to \$275,000 for a residence with 3000 square feet. The area south of Del Lago Parkway is composed of a variety of homes constructed by a variety of developers. One such developer mentioned having constructed a few houses within SISD including one for his mother. The green symbol located on the above map represents the construction of a new elementary school which will serve the needs of the community's youngest population.



Map 18. Proposed Development of Hickory Hollow Neighborhood, in the southern portion of SISD.

Hickory Hollow (map 18) is among the newest of developments to enter SISD. Homes in this community range in value from \$128,000 to \$147,000.

There are two important things to note about this community. First of all the

introductory price of a home is higher than that of Mission Del Lago and effectively does not allow individuals below the poverty line to make a new home purchase in Hickory Hollow. Ultimately the location of Hickory Hollow as a new development placed south of Loop 1604 indicates a strong potential for growth in multiple regions of the Southside Independent School District.

Summary

Residents of the Southside Independent School district know they can expect large qualitative and quantitative changes in the next few years, but there are many questions about what those changes might bring. In exploring the existing community and the impact of coming changes, there are three themes that really stand out.

First, we've heard overwhelming evidence from residents that the communities that already exist in the district are tangible and important. In El Carmen, the thriving community revolves around the church and family ties go back for generations. Family ties are equally strong in Espada, where many families still live on the original Spanish land grants. The residents of Villa Coronado face the uncertainties of living with increasing numbers of recent immigrants and the presence of a new university campus a stone's throw away. The new inhabitants of Mission del Lago add another dimension of community as they balance a desire to live on the Southside with working and going to school elsewhere. The concerns of all these communities are valid and need to be acknowledged.

A second theme is the limited opportunity structure. The gap between an increasing population and existing services necessary to meet the needs of the communities is widening. Although the Southside is rich with a sense of community, many in the district reported feeling a lack of essential services. There is a definite deficit in services such as grocery stores, health services, police protection, and infrastructure. Public schools are rapidly filling, and economic opportunities are limited.

The last theme, that of development, is recognized as necessary by the established neighborhoods of El Carmen and Espada, in order to gain needed commercial and social services. Despite that recognition, residents fear the influx of strangers and disruption of community bonds. In Mission del Lago the outlook is more positive toward development. New residents say they are attracted to the area and excited by the promise of future growth. They look forward to the establishment of A&M and the Toyota plant and its potential economic benefits.

There is no doubt that change is coming to the Southside ISD. To reconcile growth and history, the voices of all those affected must be heard. The City of San Antonio must balance the needs of current residents and future developers. With effort, community, opportunity and development can be integrated into one vision to produce a balanced vision for the future.

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